

Preserving Tennessee's Cultural Heritage: A Statewide Conservation Initiative

Tennessee's rich heritage embodied in historical documents and artifacts is preserved by many libraries, archives, historical agencies, and museums throughout the state. These institutions entrusted with the stewardship of our collective past vary widely in resources and collections management expertise but share a commitment to conserving our material culture for future generations. The Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) and Tennessee State Museum (TSM) respectfully request consideration of our proposal to conduct a three-part planning initiative to assess and begin to address systematically the collections management needs of archival materials and museum artifacts in our state.

Need and Rationale

The first step in improving the conditions for heritage collections across the state of Tennessee is to understand the problem. With the support of this planning grant, the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) and Tennessee State Museum (TSM) are committed to cooperatively carry out this IMLS planning grant to gain further knowledge of preservation needs across the state. They will be assisted by the Society of Tennessee Archivists (STA) and Tennessee Association of Museums (TAM), statewide agencies that will provide substantial assistance with access to their membership, email list serves, and publicity functions. The central goal of this project is to assess the collections management needs of libraries, archives, and museums in Tennessee. Presently, no comprehensive survey data about collections care in Tennessee exists.

Through the years, TSLA has maintained various types of outreach service programs by assisting local government archives and historic repositories in counties across the state. The state's archival holdings range from historic government records of a state that existed from 1784 to 1789, the "State of Franklin" to recently written country music scores. Of 95 counties 65 have archival facilities to care for local government records. Many university archives care for student records but also local regional historical collections. TSLA has offered preservation microfilming services to numerous county governments, archival repositories and private collections to help preserve historic records. Today its Archival Development Program assists with numerous educational programs to further improve the overall management of archives.

The TSM's Office of Extension Services provides a variety of assistance to small museums and local historical societies throughout the state such as: collections management, collections policy development, object handling and storage. The services offered without charge to non-profit and government-supported institutions include site visits and reports. From January 2006 through September 2007, the museum's curator of history and extension services has made site visits to more than twenty museums throughout the state to offer collections management assessments and recommendations. These site visits have demonstrated a real need for improved environmental monitoring and conditions, staff education concerning collections management methodology and funding for storage equipment and object conservation.

The experiences of extension services staff at the TSLA and TSM have shown that substantial environmental and management threats to the safety of collections exist

throughout the state in many institutions. However, we currently lack the comprehensive data on collections management in the state required to target our current services and future initiatives in the most efficient and effective manner.

The proposed planning project will address recommendations from the *Heritage Health Index* (HHI). The main focus of the project will be the recommendation that museums, libraries, and archives “provide safe conditions for their collections.” The first step to achieving better collections care is assessing the needs. This project will assess the collections management needs in the state, provide for related on-site investigations, and includes a substantial educational component to begin the process of addressing the needs identified in the survey. Part of this assessment process will include promoting the second Heritage Health Index recommendation for institutions to “develop an emergency plan.” The survey and site visit questionnaires will feature questions concerning disaster planning, and the workshops will also have presentations regarding this topic. This project will also address the fourth recommendation to “marshal public and private support for and raise public awareness about collections care.” The TSLA and TSM will prepare news releases to publicize the planning project, provide institutions that choose to participate with information regarding funding sources, and offer workshop presentations regarding ways to obtain funding for collections projects and to communicate with their communities about the importance of their historic documents and artifacts.

A few conditions should be considered when planning conservation efforts in Tennessee. One is that it has been our experience from extension services work that collections management needs are widespread and endemic in institutions large and small, rural and urban. The challenges of securing appropriate collections storage equipment and monitoring devices, training staff, and educating and building community support for collections are key and important for large numbers of institutions in the state. Due to the variety of regional and cultural backgrounds of the collecting institutions in the state, it is critical to approach any conservation project with discretion, taking into consideration the particular local contexts and constraints under which each institution operates.

The Planning Process

The scope of this project will encompass three major activities: statewide survey, approximately fifteen follow-up site visits, and three collections care workshops held at different locations throughout the state.

The statewide survey will be based on the *Heritage Health Index* with appropriate acknowledgment made to this source. We plan to adapt the HHI to meet the specific conditions of our state. An advisory board composed of library, archives, and museum professionals (see Appendix 8a for board member information) will advise and offer comments on a draft survey and necessary adjustments will be made. The survey will be publicized through TAM, STA, and news releases. The survey will be mailed to over 150 museums, 70 governmental archives, 30 university archives or special collections, 50 library special collections, and all state parks that maintain historical collections throughout the state (see Appendix 8b for examples of mailing lists). The survey results will be entered into a database and compiled, and a report summarizing the survey data prepared.

Staff members from TSLA and TSM will make approximately fifteen site visits to participating institutions throughout the state. The site visit format will be based on the survey questions and adjusted for any institution specific requests for information. These visits will help us confirm our survey results and offer personal assistance. A report will be prepared for each individual site visit as well as a general report encompassing all of the site visits and analyzing their findings.

The information gathered in the survey and site visit phases will form goals for the agendas for the three workshops for staff from collecting institutions. Tennessee has been traditionally divided into three regions: East, West, and Middle Tennessee. One workshop will be held in each of these regions including: State Park Conference centers similar to Fall Creek Falls, and Pickwick Landing, and in Middle Tennessee, TSLA will host a workshop. Each workshop will be offered free to library, archives, historical agencies, and museum paid and volunteer staff who would like to participate. We will do our best to accommodate all who wish to attend and estimate attendance at from thirty to fifty at each workshop.

The institutional partners for this grant include the TSLA and TSM, assisting with support and access to membership rosters, are STA and TAM. Each partner will have particular responsibilities to fulfill. The TSLA is the lead institution for this grant. The TSLA staff will bear the primary grant management duties including: responsibility for oversight of project progress and coordination, grant reporting, fiscal reporting, and responsibility for management of grant funds. Any consultants, interns, or others whose services are hired expressly for grant activities will be supervised by TSLA staff. The TSLA staff will contribute their expertise and labor for project activities such as preparing, distributing, and analyzing survey data, conducting site visits, presenting workshops, and distribution of project products. TSLA staff will be responsible for preparing all project progress and fiscal reports.

The TSM staff will actively assist in accomplishing project goals. TSM staff will contribute their expertise and labor towards preparing the survey, conducting site visits, and presenting workshops. The TSM staff will assist in publicizing grant activities and contribute to grant products. The TSM grants management staff will offer assistance to the TSLA staff in preparing grant progress and fiscal reports.

STA officers will provide access to their organization's mailing lists. They will assist in publicizing project activities to their members, and if possible provide a session at one of their conferences for a presentation on this grant project.

TAM staff and officers will provide access to their organization's mailing lists. They will provide information about the survey and workshops to their members. They will allow TSM and/or TSLA staff to make a presentation about the project at one of their yearly conferences.

Information will be shared among the grant partners primarily via email and meetings. Fortunately, the TSLA and TSM are located only a few blocks from each other, which facilitates meetings among the staff of these institutions. The staff of the TSLA and the TSM will provide most of the labor for this project, and they will work closely and cooperatively to accomplish project goals. TSLA currently has a staff member who serves as an officer of STA, and this person will serve as the project liaison to this organizational partner. The TSM currently has two staff members who serve on the board of TAM, and they will serve as the liaisons to this group. As the lead

institution for this grant, TSLA will bear the ultimate responsibility for decision making, but they will work in consultation with the other partners.

This project will produce several outcomes that will have lasting value for enhancing collections conservation in Tennessee. As a result of the project, a comprehensive database with contact information for libraries, archives, and museums in the state will be created. The results of the survey will be presented in a formal written report. The site visits will produce confidential individual reports for participating institutions as well as a general report for distribution. For the workshops, resource information packages will be developed and provided to each participant. Towards the conclusion of the project, the survey report, general site visit report, and workshop information packages will be distributed to institutions who participated in any phase of the project. Electronic versions of these documents will also be available on TSLA's website and provided to STA and TAM so that they may post them on their web sites for the use of their members.

The project roles will be performed by the staff of the TSLA and TSM. TSLA will provide several staff members to function in each aspect of the project. Carol Roberts, Preservation Services Section Director will act as Project Director. Amber Barfield, Conservator will assist in archival preservation consultant role to carry out survey visits. She will also be available to participate in the workshops. Jami Awalt, Archivist and Assistant SHRAB coordinator for Archives Development Program will be available for site visits and act as an advisor for budgetary tasks. Lauren Clark, Administrative Assistant for Preservation Services will carry out various duties related to the logistics of the surveys, travel plans, and workshops.

The lead TSM staff person for this project will be Myers Brown, Curator of History and Extensions Services. He will be responsible for acting as the chief liaison with the TSLA staff and for coordinating the project participation of the TSM staff members. He will also bear the chief responsibility for organizing the workshops. Strawberry Luck, Curator of Paper and Photographic Collections will assist in these duties as well as providing her professional expertise in preservation. Other TSM collections staff will offer their curatorial and collections management expertise to the project by participating in site visits and serving as workshop speakers working with hired consultants (for staff resumes, see Appendix 10b). Lori Thurston-Smith, Assistant Director of External Affairs will provide the TSLA staff with assistance in preparing grant progress and fiscal reports.

Budget Narrative

Financially, both agencies have had restricted budgets due to lower state revenue. Neither TSLA nor TSM have been able to carry out the levels of outreach projects desired. With this planning grant, working together, these agencies will be able to travel and physically take inventory of environmental problems, and assist sites to improve their collections care. TSLA and TSM will cover most administrative costs, but the salary costs for two summer interns will add extra staff members to further accomplish more work related to both the survey and the workshops (\$8000.00). The internship program

will also add a valuable educational component for graduate students in local museum and archival programs.

The unique geography of the state of Tennessee requires a great deal of travel. Easily one-fourth or \$10,600.00 of the budget will be used in travel for the Advisory Committee to attend meetings, and to make visits to libraries, archives, museums, and historic sites throughout the state. TSM has agreed to use their staff travel as a matching portion. It will help double the ability to cover the logistics of getting to these more distant sites across Tennessee. The survey itself will also require a substantial portion of the budget. It will require approximately \$1,100.00 to prepare and ship to the various sites across Tennessee. It completes one of the goals to cover as many historic sites as possible to make sure they qualify by the definitions of a museum or archival repository. Many may not meet the definition, but the survey will further identify those sites that are not members of any professional educational group.

Consultants will be a very valuable component of the process of preparing the survey. Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) provides valuable educational tools such as the workshops and on site consultations. Their fees to assist have been estimated at \$4000.00.

Finally, the grant funds will help make the workshops available to as many participants for as minimal cost as possible. It will provide survey and workshop participants with the most recent resource publications available as well. Two hundred and twenty-five copies of Heritage Preservation's *Guide to Emergency Response* with the "Disaster Wheel" and COSA's new *Rescuing Family Records* by David Carmicheal of Georgia will be provided, (\$8,100.00). It is intended that everyone who replied to the survey will receive this set of books. They would be distributed either in the mail or at the workshops. Environmental conservation, disaster preparedness kit will also be provided as part of the workshops. Each kit will include examples of acid free supplies, surface cleaning supplies, and basic environmental testing items. (Total cost: \$2500.00) The (close-up space) production of final reports and other basics of printing will complete the grant materials at about \$2500.00.

Cost sharing will substantially add to the statewide benefits of this grant for a total of approximately \$58,000.00. TSM and TSLA staff salary percentages will provide a value of almost \$52,000.00. More travel costs (\$4,300.00) will be absorbed by TSM. TSLA will absorb the cost of about \$2000.00 of hosting committee meetings and one workshop.

The benefits for collections care in Tennessee provided through this project will enhance conservation in the state for years to come. This project will develop baseline data needed to plan future conservation initiatives. The information gathered in this project will be used by the TSLA and TSM extension services programs to better address the conservation needs throughout the state and will provide justification for sustaining and expanding these programs.

This project will contribute to the knowledge of paid and volunteer staff at collecting institutions regarding collections care methodology. It will encourage institutions to think carefully about their collections management and how they can seek out resources to improve care of historical materials.